

Unlike the Second World War with its huge RAF base built on The Reef, The Great War was predominantly a distant conflict fought in the trenches of Europe. However, the hungry crew of a German U-boat did put ashore one night on the islet of Soay, Coll, to catch a sheep. And on 29th July 1918 possibly the same submarine fired on mail boat the *Plover* between Tiree and Uist, only to flee when a Barra soldier fired back. Warships could sometimes be seen on the horizon and there were several shipping tragedies nearby. The cargo ship *Hurlford* was lost in the Gunna Sound in 1917 and the minesweeper *HMS Jason* was sunk by a mine between Mull and Tiree with the loss of all 85 crew the same year. The destroyer *HMS Racoon* was wrecked in a snowstorm on the coast of Donegal in 1918. All 95 crew (of whom over half were stokers) were lost and two bodies were washed up on Tiree, at Crossapol and at Gott.



Minesweepers off the coast of Tiree during WW1.

Before the war, Hynish, Heylipol, Hough and Greenhill had been broken up to make new crofts, but Tom Barr refused to hand over his 3000 acre landholding, stretching from Balephetrish to Crossapol, without a big payoff. Frustrated by the lack of progress, a group of eight older men, including a church elder and sub-postmaster, ploughed land in Balephetrish without permission. They were promptly arrested and summonsed to the Oban sherriff's court. Insisting on speaking in Gaelic, the defendants pointed out that, "Mr Barr has three sons of military age not in the army, whereas there are hundreds of families in the island who do not possess an inch of land who have given their all to one or other of the services." Offered the chance to avoid a prison sentence if they promised not to encroach on the disputed land again, they refused and were given ten days in jail and a £3 fine. But they were let out of jail early so that they could make the ferry and were given a heroes' welcome on their arrival in Gott Bay.



ABOVE: 1921 Remembrance Day service at the War Memorial at Scarinish.
 BELOW: Hugh Cameron (right) with pipers Hugh MacArthur of Tullymet and Hugh Campbell of Port Glasgow, at the 1921 Remembrance Day service at the War Memorial in Scarinish.



The island's population in 1911 was 1,812, with 251 men in the recruiting age group of 19 to 41. Astonishingly, over 200 Tiree men and women served in the armed services or the Merchant Navy (the Roll of Honour lists 207). The Scarinish War Memorial records the names of 66 island men who died, a quarter of their generation. This left a bleak emptiness in the heart of the community and a significant loss of manpower in the island's economy.

*Sith! Sith!! Sith!!! Ach dhomsa chan eil sith:
 Tha iomairt ann am uchd is ionndrainn ann am chridh!
 A dh' fhaicinn gnùisean gaoil is gaire caoin
 Na mheal sinn sealan, 's tha nis san Aog.*

*Peace! Peace!! Peace!!! But for me there is no peace:
 There is conflict in my breast and a longing in my heart
 To see the beloved faces and gentle smiles
 Of those (whose company) we enjoyed for a short time and who are now dead.*

Part of a poem written by Neil Campbell Colquhoun on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918.

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